

Message Text

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EXDIS

HELSINKI FOR CAT DELEGATION - MARTIN CHESHES

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM, US, CM, UR
SUBJ: US-SOVIET CONVENTIONAL ARMS TALKS: AFRICA

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1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENCY SECRETARY GENERAL EBOUA RESPONDED TO OUR HELSINKI INITIATIVE ON CONVENTIONAL ARMS TALKS BY STATING THAT AFRICA SHOULD BE DECLARED A ZONE OF PEACE AND ALL ARMS KEPT FROM CONTINENT. HE FELT EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE SHOULD BE CONCENTRATED ON DEVELOPMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. LATE AFTERNOON OF JULY 18 I SAW SAMUEL EBOUA, SECRETARY GENERAL IN THE PRESIDENCY AND, IN CURRENT ABSENCE OF PRESIDENT AHIDJO, IN CHARGE OF SECURITY AND FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS AND ACTUALLY MORE THAN ANYONE ELSE PROBABLY RUNNING THE COUNTRY. I OUTLINED CONTENTS REFTEL B AND ASKED FOR HIS COMMENTS. EBOUA GAVE A VERY ELABORATE RESPONSE WHICH GOES BEYOND THE NATURE OF OUR HELSINKI TALKS.

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3. EBOUA OBSERVED THAT WHEN THERE ARE VIRTUALLY RESOURCELESS COUNTRIES AS THERE ARE IN AFRICA, DEVELOPMENT IS SACRIFICED EACH TIME THERE IS WAY. THE ARMS ARE PROVIDED BY THE SUPERPOWERS AND THEIR ALLIES; IF SOMALIA HAD NOT BEEN ARMED BY A SUPERPOWER, SHE COULD NOT HAVE FOMENTED WAR IN THE OGADEN. THE SECRETARY-GENERAL SUGGESTED THAT IF THE SUPERPOWERS AGREED NOT TO ARM AFRICA THERE WOULD BE NO AFRICAN WARS, HENCE HIS MAJOR SUGGESTION: DECLARE

AFRICA A ZONE OF PEACE AND KEEP ALL ARMS AWAY FROM THE CONTINENT. HE OUTLINED WHAT HE SAW AS THE THREE MAJOR PROBLEMS IN AFRICA: (A) THE INTEGRITY OF BORDERS; (B) IDEOLOGY CONFLICT; AND (C) RACIAL DISCRIMINATION. IT IS ONLY ON THE ISSUE OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION THAT BOTH THE MODERATES AND "PROGRESSIVES" ACT TOGETHER. AT THE SAME TIME HE SEES IDEOLOGY AS NOT SO IMPORTANT IN THE LONG RUN. DEVELOPMENT IS THE ANSWER TO IDEOLOGY. THE RADICALS THRIVE IN COUNTRIES WITH DEVELOPMENT PROBLEMS, AND WHERE ECONOMIC PROGRESS TAKES PLACE THERE IS UNLIKELY TO BE MUCH INTEREST IN RADICALISM. AS ONE MEANS TO ECONOMIC PROGRESS HE LOOKS FORWARD TO MORE BUSINESS AND BUSINESS RELATIONS BETWEEN CAMEROON AND HER OVERSEAS FRIENDS. IN SHORT, DISARMAMENT WILL BE EASY TO ATTAIN IF DEVELOPMENT IN ITS VARIOUS ASPECTS PROCEEDS APACE IN ALL THE COUNTRIES IN AFRICA. HE ENDED HIS COMMENT BY REITERATING THE POINT THAT AFRICA SHOULD BE MADE INTO A ZONE OF PEACE.

4. COMMENT : COMMENTS BY EBOUA AND GENERAL SEMENGUE (REFTEL A) ARE REINFORCED BY THOSE THAT HAVE BEEN MADE PREVIOUSLY BY FOREIGN MINISTER JEAN KEUTCHA. AFTER MPLA ANGOLA VICTORY WITH SOVIET AND CUBAN SUPPORT, HE STATED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS THAT HE FELT THE UNITED STATES HAD LET DOWN THOSE (READ CAMEROON) WHO HAD HELD THE LINE AGAINST OAU RECOGNITION OF MPLA BY SECRETARY KISSINGER'S NOT SECURING AN AGREEMENT WITH THE SOVIETS ON LIMITING THE FURTHER INTRODUCTION OF SOVIET ARMS AND CUBAN PERSONNEL INTO ANGOLA WHICH THEREBY ASSURED THE EVENTUAL VICTORY OF
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MPLA AGAINST ITS COMPETITORS. PROBLEM WITH RESPECT TO CAMEROON WHICH NEITHER SEMENGUE NOR EBOUA FOCUSED ON IS THAT CAMEROON IS IN PROCESS OF ACQUIRING THE MINIMUM AMOUNT OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT WHICH IT FEELS NECESSARY TO MEET ITS DEFENSIVE NEEDS ON BASIS PERCEIVED THREAT NEIGHBORS' CURRENT ARMS INVENTORIES. THUS, ANY LIMITATION AGREED UPON BY US AND USSR WHICH IMPINGES UPON CAMEROON'S DEFENSE PROCUREMENT MAY WORK AGAINST THEIR PERCEIVED INTEREST.
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